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EDITORIAL

Relative Value Studies—1964

BY EARLY DECEMBER all members of the California Medical Association will have received copies of the Fourth Edition of the Relative Value Studies pioneered by CMA in 1956.

The initial edition eight years ago was embraced not only by CMA members but by governmental agencies, insurance carriers and physicians throughout the country. A number of state medical associations followed California's lead and produced RVS's of their own, patterned on and frequently copied in whole or in part from this publication.

A second edition followed the first, in 1957, and the current edition came out in 1960. The 1964 version thus carries on the pioneering work that was started in 1956 and is now receiving acclaim from all interested parties.

The forthcoming edition of this work will appear in five sections rather than the four divisions previously used. Anesthesiology has been made a separate section so that the distinct differences in operating costs or overhead between that specialty and other fields of practice may be more adequately identified. This section does not change the formula for computing anesthesia values and allowances and does not, with few exceptions, change the basic allowances which have appeared in the current RVS edition.

In the medicine section the new RVS edition has added new services, including a description of "health supervision," which is a frequent service in pediatric care. Items have also been added to reflect the changes taking place in the field of cardiology and pulmonary physiology. Changes have

been made in the format of physical medicine, to reflect medicine's awareness of rehabilitative procedures as distinguished from what was formerly identified as physical therapy.

The section on surgery, largest in the publication, includes a broader listing of procedures, especially in the field of cardiovascular surgery. This portion also contains information derived from a study of fees for surgical assistants. A survey to determine the usual level of these fees was conducted under a resolution approved by the 1963 House of Delegates.

Under radiology the new RVS adds a number of procedures involving injection and placement of radioactive materials. The laboratory section adds new procedures in keeping with laboratory developments in the past few years.

Wrapping up the entire edition is an expanded, comprehensive index designed to facilitate the location of any procedure listed in the studies. Cooperating in the production of the index was the Health Insurance Council, an organization representing the underwriters of more than 90 per cent of the commercial health insurance coverage in the country.

More than 2,000 physician services are listed in the new volume, an increase of more than 200 over the third edition.

A foreword again cautions the user of the Relative Value Studies that this is not a fee schedule, that it must not be used as such and that the values shown in one section of the publication cannot be used in other sections with accuracy or propriety. Also a part of the instructions for using the RVS is the original committee report rendered in 1956 and still considered appropriate by the Committee on Fees which has produced the current edition.

The Fourth Edition of the Relative Value Studies culminates the work of this committee over the past two years. During this time more than 3,000 physician-hours have been devoted to this publication, plus uncounted hours of clerical and staff time.